



THE JEWISH DAILY

פארשפארד

SHA'AR ZAHAV

שער זהב

5740 OCT 1979 תשרי

from where i stand

One of the paradoxes we face each year is that of the making of "new year" resolutions which we are never sure we will fulfill. Jewish tradition enabled us to free ourselves from the obligations incurred unwittingly through taking vows which we could not honor. This was done through a legal formula like the Kol Nidre. Through the recitation of such a legal formula, one was released from any future obligation made under duress or under false pretenses, or even unwittingly. The rabbis of old were only too well aware of the pressures under which their Jewish contemporaries labored, when it came to foreswearing Judaism, etc.

But the rabbis also urged us to try to be aware enough of what was going on around us so that we could minimize the number of vows and obligations which we would take on and which would have to be annulled eventually.

We do the same things today. Even at the secular New Year, we make "resolutions" which we hope we will keep, but which, more often than not, we regret having made as time goes on. Or, as is often the case, rather than regret our having made them, we get angry at ourselves for not having done more to realize them.

I think we have a real opportunity to do what our predecessors have not done: to set our goals higher than we can reach, and then to reach them! While I am not suggesting that we strive to do things which are sure to fail, I am sure that if we only strive to survive, we will stagnate and die. Synagogues, by their natures, require so much from their congregants, mostly because they are primarily volunteer organizations, that folks sometimes feel lost or unappreciated with the work they put into their spiritual homes. My suggestion is that, rather than discouraging our members and friends from active participation because of a fear of lack of peer support, let's find ways of meeting the Jewish needs of our congregation in additional ways.

One such way is through the formation of "special interest groups" (called havurot in Hebrew), which may include areas of interest of almost any description, such as classes, "events" or special functions, literary groups, sports groups, or almost any other sort of group which functions through the synagogue for the benefit of its members. Such havurot do not require the participation of the entire congregation, and can, if they so desire, function almost independently of it. The difference is that such groups are constituted entirely of our members and, as such, under synagogue auspices, are functioning as part of the synagogue. One other example comes to mind: an opera havurah, for those interested in pursuing this form of enjoyment in the company of their fellow-congregants.

We have so much to offer each other, and we have such fine opportunities to do so, that I urge each of you to "resolve" to become active in an aspect of the synagogue in such a way that you will have no reason to break the vows that you make, and that your increased participation in the life of the synagogue will become a source of great joy and reward to you. In that way, one of the most important lessons of the Yamim Noraim (The Days of Awe) will be learned: while we repent for the

errors of our ways in days gone by, our obligation is to committing ourselves to improving things in the present for the future, to building on the lessons from our past, and with our tremendous capacity for creativity, to forging ahead to meet the needs of our future together. As Theodore Herzl put it: "If you will it, it is no dream."

Allen

help!

We've been receiving a growing number of requests lately about housing needs, employment needs, and other assorted personal needs. These requests have come from folks who have recently moved to the city, and who turn to us for assistance. Until now we have been unable to be of much help, since we have no lists of housing or jobs in our "office". But we'd like to change that, and you can help. You can do it in the following manner: if you know of a job that is, or is becoming, available, please let us know about it (with as much information as possible), and we will, in turn, try to make that information available to those requesting it from us. Similarly, we welcome information about housing and roommate availabilities, since that seems to be a constant concern.

Finally, if you would be willing to open your home, once in a (great) while to people who turn up (like a recent visitor from Israel, whom we couldn't help) who need a place for just a night or two until they leave town or find something else, please let us know.

If you can help in any of the ways listed above, leave word with the answering service at 626-3131 and we'll get back to you right away. Todah rabbah (many thanks).

membership

GOOD NEWS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE.....

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur membership campaign efforts have rewarded us with many new members. We estimate that that by the time you read this our membership will be very close to 150. Secondly, the Committee is a real committee consisting of 6 active people. And thirdly, we are pleased to announce that we are now co-sexually co-chaired. Leila Raim was elected co-chair at our last meeting. She has some very pertinent things to say about membership, so I will turn the column over to her by saying that I am pleased and honored to be working with her.

Shalom,

Bill Goldstein
Co-Chair, Membership

Three months ago I walked into Sha'ar Zahav into an atmosphere filled with a sense of homecoming. That sense of "home" has increased during the months as I have become more involved and committed to our Congregation. The more I learn, the more I realize how very much there is to do...and how relatively few have been shouldering so much of the responsibility for so long. We are a viable Jewish community with all of the rights and responsibilities that that implies. We justly claim our legitimacy within the larger Jewish community. We therefore must do the work entailed in earning those rights; and we are earning them. We are earning them by our honest effort, but more is needed. Sha'ar Zahav needs us all, needs all our efforts and all our talents.

We are doing much and doing it well. I'm proud of my Sha'ar Zahav. Happily our plans exceed our present capacities...so we must increase our capacities. This is not difficult to accomplish. Each of us must do a little more. Those who are not yet members are urged to join and participate to start 5740 C.E., being counted, written in our book of life, and adding their financial support.

Those members who are not active in working with and for the congregation are urged to increase their participation. I won't tell you what needs doing; whatever you can, needs doing.

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SPECIAL NOTE IN MY CAPACITY AS WOMEN'S MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR: Prior to my coming to Sha'ar Zahav I understand there developed some painful conflict generated in large measure by the differences between some of the men and some of the women.

We are all products of our history subject to the patterning of our culture. Sexist attitudes (in men and women alike) need constant attention to overcome. The best changes we effect are those made with love, not animosity. The battle is against sexism, not sexists. Some of those best able to wage that battle are absent and we need them. We need them to effect the changes that I, and many of us, most want.

While these conflicts still exist there is now an atmosphere which can turn what might have become our downfall into the foundation of our greatest strength and understanding. Conflict, if left unresolved, can defeat us; but if we resolve our conflicts creatively we are all the richer for it. To be truly successful we need those of you who have been staying away to join in the effort to make Sha'ar Zahav a synagogue for all of the Jewish Lesbian and Gay community.

Shalom,

Leila Raim
Co-Chair, Membership

education committee

On Tuesday, September 18, the education committee began a Hebrew class with Haim Gamborg teaching. The class is held every Tuesday night from 7:30 to 9:30 pm. The first hour of the class is devoted to Biblical Hebrew using prayers from the Siddur; the second hour is reserved for the study of modern Hebrew. Individuals who are interested in joining the class should contact Haim at services. The course is held at the Jewish Community Center.

On Saturday, October 13, Allen Bennett will be leading a Liturgy Workshop. This is intended for people interested in leading services for the first time, as well as people who are currently doing so. Focus will be on our liturgy and public speaking techniques. The workshop will run from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm at 1650 Page Street, San Francisco. Bring a bag lunch.

On Saturday, November 17, Daniel Chesir will be leading a one day workshop entitled "How the Orthodox Pray (or Dovening for the uninitiated)." Daniel, our co-leader and ex-yeshiva-bochur, will demonstrate and explain laying tefillin, using a tallit, and the recitation of the morning prayers. The workshop is especially aimed at those of us from less traditional backgrounds interested in becoming more aware of traditional Judaism. The workshop will be from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm at 631 O'Farrell Street. Bring a bag lunch.

The enthusiastic response to Haim's Hebrew class, and the increasing offers from members and friends to teach classes and workshops speaks well of our congregation's commitment to studying and sharing Judaism. The possibilities for courses are infinite. If you have ideas for classes that you think should be offered by the synagogue, please let me know. For information on any of the classes call me at 863-1998.

Shalom

Steven Fritsch Rudser

(Note: the following sermon was delivered by Laurie Radovsky on the evening of Rosh Hashanah)

Most of us are personally familiar with the pressures of being Gay and Jewish, or at least are close to people who are. Being Gay is hard enough; being Gay and Jewish is even more difficult, since we are the inheritors of a religious tradition which rejects us because of our sexual preference. In some ways, it's harder to be a Jewish Lesbian than to be a Gay Jewish male, and that's what I'd like to talk about tonight.

From the beginning, girls are shown that the male role in Judaism is the preferred one. In mainstream Judaism, rabbis are men. The president and board members are men. Most, if not all, of those active in services are men. God is spoken of as "He". Girls see their brothers bar-mitzvahed, but bas-mitzvahs are laughed at by their families. Or, in many cases, if girls are bas-mitzvahed, it is during Friday night service, and it's not as big a celebration as a regular Saturday bar-mitzvah. The only role models girls and young women see for themselves are the Matriarchs in the Bible, the Hadassah women, and perhaps the Rabbi's wife, and her role seems to consist of catering Sedars, lighting Shabbas candles, and having babies. Any woman, straight or gay, who rejects traditional sex stereotypes, must do some serious revamping of her childhood conceptions of Judaism if she is to remain comfortable with her Jewishness. For many women, Judaism has such negative connotations that they have no desire to do so, and never explore alternative Jewish lifestyles.

Women also have less Jewish background to work with than men. They have less Jewish education; many more men than women know Hebrew, and are familiar with Jewish history and tradition. And, on top of the Jewish factors alienating women from Judaism, there's the attitude of the Women's movement toward the so-called Judeo-Christian tradition. While I would agree that the perception of women in Judaism is completely different from that of Christianity, Judaism is a patriarchal and often sexist religion.

So how does this affect Sha'ar Zahav? So far, his has been an interesting exposition on the sociological pressured of being a Jewish woman but what does it mean to you? Well, there are a lot more men involved in Sha'ar Zahav than women. Few women appear at any given service, and Lesbian newcomers are alienated by the predominantly male atmosphere. The women that are members here often feel inadequate in their Jewish background, and unable to participate as fully as they would like to. This is especially apparent to me in the area in which I am active at Sha'ar Zahav, that of ritual and liturgy.

I realize that Sha'ar Zahav as a congregation is acutely aware of these problems, and is trying to attract women and get them involved in the synagogue. A lot of attention is paid to the language of our liturgy, such as changing the word Father of Parent and King to Ruler, and eliminating the pronoun "He" from the prayers. My first reaction to this attitude was "Oh, thank you so much for caring about these issues." Then I started feeling that of course they should be important considerations of Sha'ar Zahav, after all, it is the voice of Lesbian and Gay male Jews of San Francisco. Sometimes I even find myself impatient with you and us and myself, when I see the old sexist patterns resurfacing. But they're deeply ingrained in all of us, and it takes a real struggle to fight against them. We have to work together to eliminate those patterns, the sexism and patriarchy, from our Jewish beliefs and practices.

I call on my sisters to make Sha'ar Zahav our congregation, to take the power and responsibility which is rightfully ours and is being offered to us. I call on my brothers of support us in our doing so. Together, we can work to make Sha'ar Zahav a true congregation of men and women working together, a congregation of Lesbian and Gay male Jews.

oneg

The "Oneg Shabbat" of joy of the Sabbath traditionally was initiated to cultivate intellectual, creative and spiritual activities reflecting the Sabbath spirit. This exists today in Sha'ar Zahav each Friday night after services, on holidays and special events. It is now, after the highest of Holy days that we can conceive what we would like to accomplish with Onegs for the coming year.

Keeping in mind the origins of Oneg Shabbat, the Oneg Committee suggests that each member and friend of the congregation seize the opportunity to sponsor an Oneg at least once this coming year. By supplying a table of goodies as a focal point around which the joy of Shabbat can come alive, you can share, commemorate, honor, or celebrate any occasion.

In retrospect, the Oneg Committee would like to again express gratitude to all who assisted the congregation by supporting and sponsoring Onegs in the Jewish year of 5739. A particular note of thanks goes to Bill Goldstein for his fine work in organizing this committee as it stands today and executing such events as the Oneg for the Harvey Milk memorial, the Channukah-Latka party and the Seder.

Appreciation and recognition is extended to sponsors for their efforts in September:

Sept 7 Alan Schrager, commemorating the Yahrzeit of his mother, Lillian Schrager.

Irene Ogus, honoring the visit of her sister and brother in law, Marion and Monty Bersinsky from London.

Sept 14 David Strachan and Pete Tanen, celebrating 18 months as lovers.

Elliot Schneck, celebrating his birthday.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Laurie Radofski, celebrating her birthday.

Jerry Rosenstein, celebrating being alive.

Walter Leiss, in memory of his mother and father, and honoring the forthcoming wedding of his niece Joy Keeperman.

See me at services or call me at home 346-7077 to reserve your special date for Oneg sponsorship. It is a mitzvah
Shalom
David Gass

yahrzeits

October 10	Jacob Leiss
October 17	Leonard Levine

birthdays

October 1	Carol Ruth Silver
October 2	Burton Tessler
October 4	Tal'or Bar-Shank
October 7	Lenard Giteck
October 7	Randall H. Heilbrunn
October 11	Vivian Kleiman
October 14	Jason Bartel
October 20	Bernard Pechter
October 22	Michael Wingrat
October 22	Terry Neil Meyerson
October 23	Seth Charney
October 29	Allan Berenstein
October 29	Ellis Jacobs

donations

Thanks to the following for their gifts to Congregation Sha'ar Zahav:

Alan French
Walter Leiss
Mark Leno
Anthony Gardner Lowell
Melvin Mann
Jerry Nodiff
Bernard Pechter
Gerald Rosenstein
Sinai Memorial Chapel
Marvin Weinberger

If you would like to donate to the Congregation in honor of an event (a new residence, car, etc) or in the memory of someone, such contributions will be graciously accepted by Sha'ar Zahav. Contribution in any amount (\$2.00 minimum) will be most welcome. If you would like your contribution not acknowledged in the FORWARD, please note that on your check.

of interest

We received a letter from Peter Messina, Membership Coordinator at the San Francisco Jewish Community Center, and to quote a section of his letter:

"In case your Congregation is unaware, the SF JCC offers a Couples Membership. . . actually a "Couple" can be any two people as long as they reside under the same roof. If anyone wishing to take out a membership, they can do so by filling out an application with our Reception desk or if the need is there, an individual, or couple may do some volunteer work in lieu of their fee reduction. If the latter is needed, the person(s) need to set an appointment with us."

calendar of events

- October 5, Sukkot, First day
Evening Services at 8:00 p.m.
Torah portion, Lev. 22:26-
23:44; Num. 29:12-16
Prophetic reading, Zech. 14:1-21
- October 12, Evening Services at 8:00 p.m.
Torah portion, Shemini Azeret,
Deut. 14:22-16:17; Num.
29:35-30:1
Prophetic reading, I Kings
8:54-66
- October 19, Evening Services at 8:00 p.m.
Torah portion, Bereshit, Gen.
1:1-6:8
Prophetic reading, I Sam. 20:18-
42
- October 26, Evening Services at 8:00 p.m.
Torah portion, No'ah, Gen.
6:19-11:32
Prophetic reading, Is. 54:1-55:5
- November 2, Evening Services at 8:00 p.m.
Torah portion, Lekh Lekha, Gen.
12:1-17:27
Prophetic reading, Is. 40:27-
41:16

congregation sha'ar zahav

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